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NATO: Response to the Crisis in Ukraine and Security Concerns in Central and Eastern Europe

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Summary

Russia's actions in Ukraine and its alleged role in the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 have caused observers and policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic, including Members of Congress, to reassess the role of the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in upholding European security. The security concerns of NATO's Central and Eastern European member states and non-NATO member states such as Moldova and Ukraine are of particular concern.

NATO has strongly condemned Russian actions in Ukraine and has taken steps aimed both at reassuring allies and partners in Central and Eastern Europe and at deterring further Russian aggression. These include demonstrations of support for Ukraine and its territorial integrity; actions to demonstrate NATO's commitment to defending Central and Eastern European allies; and measures aimed at rebuking Russia. NATO members have said they will continue to conduct previously planned military exercises in Ukraine and elsewhere in the region.

The United States has been a key driver of the NATO response and has taken additional military measures intended to reassure its allies and partners in Central and Eastern Europe. These include the deployment of U.S. fighter jets and 600 paratroopers to Poland and the Baltic states, and U.S. naval vessels to the Black and Baltic Seas. In June, the Obama Administration requested congressional approval for \$925 million in the Department of Defense's FY2015 Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget to fund a proposed European Reassurance Initiative (ERI). Among other things, the ERI would enable augmented U.S. troop rotations and military infrastructure in Central and Eastern Europe. The United States has supplied the Ukrainian government with some nonlethal military assistance, but has thus far ruled out providing lethal military aid.

Although these actions have been welcomed by supporters of the United States and NATO, some analysts and allied governments have called for a more concerted military response. Among other things, critics have called for more robust forward or permanent deployment of U.S. and NATO forces in Central and Eastern Europe; additional military exercises in the region; and additional military assistance to Ukraine, including military training and anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons.

The U.S. Congress has played an active role in guiding the U.S. response to the Ukraine crisis, including by authorizing a \$1 billion loan guarantee to the Ukrainian government, \$150 million in financial assistance to Ukraine and other Central and Eastern European countries, and sanctions against Russia (P.L. 113-95). However, some Members of Congress have called on the Obama Administration and NATO to take additional military action to reassure allies and deter Russia. Some Members have also called for a more resolute demonstration of NATO's commitment to enlargement, including to Georgia, a former republic Soviet republic, with which Russia had a military conflict in 2008. For example, the proposed Forging Peace through Strength in Ukraine and the Transatlantic Alliance Act (H.R. 4433) calls for additional NATO and U.S. military assistance to Ukraine and calls for immediate NATO membership for Montenegro and the granting of a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia.

This report addresses the NATO and U.S. military response to the crisis in Ukraine. It does not discuss political, economic, or energy policy responses. For information on these and other aspects of the crisis response, see CRS Report RL33460, *Ukraine: Current Issues and U.S. Policy*, by Steven Woehrel.

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Overview

The U.S. Congress has expressed deep concern over Russia's annexation of Crimea and its role in the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. Among other things, the crisis has heightened concerns in the United States and in Europe about the future direction and scope of the transatlantic security relationship and the cornerstone of that relationship, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Some policy makers and analysts have called for a reassessment of the transatlantic community's progress in realizing its goal of a Europe "whole, free, and at peace," citing security concerns in some of NATO's Central and Eastern European member states and ongoing territorial disputes in countries on the alliance's borders, such as Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia. Questions about NATO's commitment and capacity to defend its member states and about the nature of the alliance's relationship with Russia have moved to the forefront of discussions about NATO's future. These questions are expected to feature prominently at NATO's next summit of heads of state and government, scheduled to take place in Wales on September 4-5, 2014.

The crisis in Ukraine has also exposed longer-standing tensions within NATO regarding its strategic focus. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has evolved from an exclusive focus on territorial defense and deterrence in Europe to overseeing a range of military and crisis management operations across the globe. This transformation was predicated largely on the perception that Russia no longer posed a security threat to NATO, and on a conviction that the primary security challenges facing the allies emanated from beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. However, some NATO members, including many former members of the communist bloc, have consistently expressed concern that the alliance's transformation could come at the expense of its capacity to uphold its commitment to collective defense, enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. After more than a decade of war in Afghanistan and against the backdrop of a militarily resurgent Russia, some allies are calling for a renewed NATO focus on collective defense.

Debates about NATO's mission come against the backdrop of continued economic stagnation in Europe and long-standing U.S. concerns about a downward trend in European defense spending, shortfalls in European defense capabilities, and burden sharing within the alliance. In 2013, total defense spending by NATO European allies as a percentage of GDP was about 1.6%; and just three NATO allies (Greece, the UK, and the United States) exceeded the alliance's goal of spending 2% of GDP on defense. Since 2001, the U.S. share of total allied defense spending has grown from 63% to 72%.¹ Analysts in the United States have long asserted that defense spending in many European countries is inefficient, with disproportionately high personnel costs coming at the expense of much-needed research, development, and procurement. In 2013, only four allies met a NATO guideline to devote 20% of defense expenditures to the purchase of major equipment, considered a key indicator of the pace of military modernization.² These trends correlate with significant shortfalls in key military capabilities, including strategic air- and sealift; aerial refueling; and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR).

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and others have argued that the budgetary constraints facing allied governments could spur much-needed defense cooperation among European allies. At NATO's May 2012 summit, the allies committed to a "Smart Defense" initiative that calls for cooperation, prioritization, and specialization in pursuit of needed defense

¹ NATO, *Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence*, February 24, 2014.

² The four allies are the United States, France, Turkey, and the UK. See NATO, *Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence*, February 24, 2014.

capabilities.³ Some critics maintain that this is just the latest in a long line of post-Cold War efforts to enhance capabilities that have had mixed success, at best. They argue that the limited outcomes may reflect a general lack of public support for military engagement and divergent threat perceptions both across the Atlantic and within Europe. As noted above, within Europe, some allies have emphasized the need for territorial defense capabilities, while others have stressed the importance of more flexible, rapidly deployable units and civilian-military crisis management operations. An increasingly strained budget environment and heightened concerns about the security threat from Russia appear to be amplifying these differences.

U.S. officials have consistently underscored their firm commitment to the transatlantic security relationship and the collective defense of the alliance. However, far-reaching defense budget cuts in the United States, the Obama Administration's "rebalance" to Asia, and the withdrawal over the past two years of two of the U.S. Army's four Brigade Combat Teams based in Europe have raised questions about future U.S. commitments to European security. Russia's actions in Ukraine have heightened these concerns.

NATO and U.S. Military Response

Reflecting the views of the United States and its European allies, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen has characterized Russia's military aggression as "the most serious crisis in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall," and declared that NATO can "no longer do business as usual with Russia."⁴ NATO's response to the crisis thus far has focused on demonstrating support for Ukraine and its territorial integrity; reaffirming the allied commitment to defending Central and Eastern European allies; and rebuking Russia. In early April, NATO announced the suspension of all "practical" civilian and military cooperation with Russia in the framework of the NATO-Russia Council. Political dialogue between the two sides will continue. Cooperative activities in the NATO-Russia Council that could be affected include a helicopter maintenance fund and a counternarcotics initiative in Afghanistan, and some joint counter-terrorism initiatives.

NATO Support for Ukraine

The allies have agreed to strengthen political and military cooperation with the government in Kyiv. This includes providing military trainers to assist in Ukraine's military modernization efforts and improving the interoperability of Ukrainian and allied armed forces through exercises and joint operations.⁵ In June, Secretary General Rasmussen announced the creation of several new NATO trust funds to help develop Ukrainian defense capacity, including in the areas of logistics, command and control, cyber defense, and assisting retired military personnel to adapt to civilian life.⁶ Total contributions to these trust funds has not as yet been publicly disclosed.

NATO has not provided Ukraine with military hardware and is not expected to do so. This does not, however, preclude bilateral military assistance from individual allies. For example, as discussed below, the United States has provided Ukraine with non-lethal military aid (see,

³ NATO officials have announced 24 new multinational defense projects in which assets are pooled or shared, including acquisition, training, force protection, and ISR initiatives. For more information, see NATO's Smart Defense webpage: <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/78125.htm>.

⁴ NATO, "A Strong NATO in a Changed World," Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Brussels Forum," March 21, 2014.

⁵ Small Ukrainian deployments contribute to NATO operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and off the Horn of Africa.

⁶ NATO, "NATO Foreign Ministers Agree on Readiness Plan, Endorse Support Package for Ukraine," June 25, 2014.

“Ukraine”). All NATO allies have thus far ruled out providing Ukraine with lethal military aid, arguing, among other things, that such assistance could lead to a further escalation of the conflict.

NATO Reassurance Measures in Central and Eastern Europe

Since Russia’s annexation of Crimea, NATO has sought to reinforce its commitment to defending central and eastern European allies. Measures taken thus far have centered on air defense and surveillance, maritime deployments, and military exercises.⁷ Despite calls from some member states, NATO has thus far ruled out permanent troop deployments in the region.

- **Air Defense and Surveillance:** NATO member states have deployed additional fighter jets to the alliance’s Baltic Air Policing mission and NATO is carrying out aerial surveillance flights over Poland and Romania. In April, NATO increased the Air Policing Mission from four to 16 fighter jets. The mission to protect Baltic airspace has been led by NATO allies on a rotational basis since 2004 (the Baltic countries do not have their own air forces). Denmark, France, Poland, and the UK are each currently contributing four fighter aircraft to the mission. Canada has also deployed jets to Romania to conduct training exercises with the Romanian air force. Since mid-March 2014, NATO airborne warning and control system (AWACS) surveillance aircraft have been conducting twice daily flights to monitor events in Ukraine, one over Poland and one over Romania. NATO has used surveillance images to monitor Russian troop movements along the Ukrainian border.
- **Maritime deployments:** NATO has deployed two maritime groups on patrols to the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas. One group of 5-7 mine clearance vessels has been patrolling the Baltic Sea since late April. It includes ships from Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Norway. A second maritime contingent of frigates has been patrolling the Mediterranean since May. It includes ships from Canada, Germany, Norway, Turkey, and the United States. In mid-July, a third NATO maritime group participated in naval exercises in the Black Sea. The group of four ships (from Italy, Turkey, and the UK) conducted interoperability exercises with naval units from Greece, Italy, Romania, Turkey, and the United States.
- **Military Exercises:** NATO member states have conducted several military exercises in Central and Eastern Europe, and have planned at least one major exercise in Ukraine in September. From May 16-23, about 6,000 allied troops conducted a military exercise in Estonia aimed at repelling a potential attack on Estonian territory. Troops from Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the UK, and the United States participated in the NATO exercise, dubbed “Steadfast Javelin 1.” The U.S. Army-led Rapid Trident 2014, originally scheduled to take place in western Ukraine in July, has been tentatively postponed until mid-September. The Army anticipates that up to 14 nations, including many NATO member states, will participate in the exercise, which will reportedly feature a combined U.S.-Ukrainian battalion headquarters practicing a

⁷ For more information on NATO reassurance measures, see the Allied Command Operation’s Assurance Measures website, <http://www.aco.nato.int/nato-assurance-measures.aspx>; and The White House, *Fact Sheet: European Reassurance Initiative and Other U.S. Efforts in Support of NATO Allies and Partners*, June 3, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/03/fact-sheet-european-reassurance-initiative-and-other-us-efforts-support->.

peacekeeping operation.⁸ Last year's Rapid Trident exercise in Ukraine included 1,300 troops from 17 nations.

Although they have welcomed these measures, some allies in Central and Eastern Europe have called for a more robust demonstration of NATO's willingness and capacity to defend them. Most notably, leaders in Poland and the Baltic State have advocated permanent NATO troop deployments on their territories (see "Security Situation and Concerns in Central and Eastern Europe"). Other allies have cautioned against a further "militarization" of NATO relations with Russia, highlighting, among other things, NATO's 1997 pledge to refrain from permanently stationing substantial combat forces in countries that joined NATO after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Officials in Germany, for example, have said that permanent troop deployments in member states formerly aligned with the Soviet Union could represent a counter-productive provocation of Russia.⁹

U.S. Reassurance Measures in Central and Eastern Europe – *Operation Atlantic Resolve* and the Proposed European Reassurance Initiative

As well as being a key proponent of the NATO response thus far, the Obama Administration has taken additional military measures intended to reassure Central and Eastern European allies. These efforts, under the umbrella of U.S. European Command's *Operation Atlantic Resolve*, have consisted primarily of enhanced U.S. troop rotations in the region and joint military exercises with allies and partners. Measures taken to date include: deployment in March and April of an additional six F-15 fighter jets to the Baltic Air Policing mission; deployment in March of an aviation detachment of 12 F-16s and 300 personnel to Łask Air Base in Poland; deployment of 175 marines to Romania to supplement the Black Sea rotational force, which will now consist of about 400 marines; and deployment of 150 paratroopers each to Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. According to the Department of Defense, these and other U.S. troops have participated in at least ten land-based military exercises with NATO Central and Eastern European and other allies this spring and summer.¹⁰ The United States has suspended all military-to-military activities with Russia, including two previously scheduled trilateral exercises with Canada and Norway.

The Defense Department has also enhanced U.S. naval presence in the Black and Baltic Seas. In March, April, and May 2014 four U.S. naval vessels (the *USS Truxton*, the *USS Donald Cook*, the *USS Taylor*, and the *USS Vella Gulf*) were at varying times deployed to the Black Sea for naval exercises. The *USS Oscar Austin* has conducted naval exercises and port visits in the Baltic Sea.

The Proposed European Reassurance Initiative

During a visit to Poland on June 3, 2014, President Obama announced that he would seek congressional approval for up to \$1 billion to fund a European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) intended to reassure allies and bolster the security and defense capabilities of partner countries in the region. The Administration has since requested \$925 million in the Department of Defense's FY2015 Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget request to fund the initiative. According to the request, the proposed ERI would fund reassurance measures in five main areas:¹¹

⁸ U.S. European Command Fact Sheet, *Operation Atlantic Resolve*, June 26, 2014. http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0514_atlanticresolve/FactSheet_OperationAtlanticResolve_3Jul14.pdf; Nancy Montgomery, "U.S. Army to Proceed with Planned Exercises in Ukraine," *Stars and Stripes*, March 13, 2014.

⁹ See, for example, "Ukraine Crisis Exposes Gaps between Berlin and NATO," *Spiegelonline*, April 7, 2014.

¹⁰ For more detailed information on Operation Atlantic Resolve, see U.S. European Command Fact Sheet, *Operation Atlantic Resolve*, June 26, 2014. http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0514_atlanticresolve/FactSheet_OperationAtlanticResolve_3Jul14.pdf.

¹¹ See, Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Amendment Overview, *Overseas Contingency Operations*,

- **Increased U.S. military presence in Europe (\$440 million).** Could include augmented U.S. Army rotations to the NATO Response Force (NRF); enhanced F-15 fighter jets deployments and increased participation in NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission; expanded naval presence in the Baltic and Black Seas; and expanded Marine rotations through the Black Sea Rotational Force in Romania.
- **Improved infrastructure to allow for greater military responsiveness (\$250 million).** Could include improvements to air fields and training ranges and operations centers in Central and Eastern Europe. Improvements would require agreement from host nations.
- **Enhanced prepositioning of U.S. equipment in Europe (\$125 million).** Activities could include adding U.S. air equipment in Eastern Europe; and improved prepositioning facilities for Marine equipment in Norway.
- **More extensive U.S. participation in military exercises and training with allies and partners (\$75 million).** Could include increased U.S. force levels in military exercises in Europe, as well as funding to enable enhanced allied and partner participation in such exercises. The exercises aim to improve allied and partner readiness and interoperability.
- **Intensified efforts to build military capacity in newer NATO members and partner countries (\$35 million, in addition to \$75 million from Department of State).** Activities could focus on building military capacity in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Areas of emphasis include filling critical operational gaps in border security and air and maritime awareness and strengthening civilian oversight of the defense establishment.

The proposed ERI has been welcomed by Central and Eastern European leaders who have called for increased U.S. military engagement in the region. However, while the ERI would allow the United States to prolong measures that were already planned or were taken in the wake of Russia's annexation of Crimea, it falls short of the permanent basing of NATO forces called for by some in the region. Critics emphasize that contributions to the ERI from NATO members other than the United States could be important, both to enable a sustained response and to demonstrate allied unity. On the other hand, as noted above, some Western European leaders, including in Italy and Germany, have repeatedly cautioned against further militarization in the region.¹²

Security Situation and Concerns in Central and Eastern Europe

Poland and the *Visegrád Four*

Russia's annexation of Crimea and its continued support for separatist forces in eastern Ukraine have sharpened concerns in Central and Eastern Europe about Vladimir Putin's possible future intentions. Geographical proximity and long-standing historical relationships, including the experience of Soviet invasion and domination during the Communist era, color regional attitudes toward Russia. Many officials and analysts in Central and Eastern Europe relate that they have not been especially surprised by Russia's actions in Ukraine and assert that their past efforts to convey concerns about President Putin's revanchist ambitions went largely unheeded in the United States and Western Europe.¹³

June 2014.

http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2015/amendment/FY2015_Budget_Request_Overview_Book_Amended.pdf.

¹² See, for example, Christopher Chivvis, "What Can Obama's \$1 Billion Investment in European Security Actually Buy?" Rand Corporation, June 9, 2014; and "Troops In," *The Economist*, June 7, 2014.

¹³ See, for example, "An Open Letter to the Obama Administration from Central and Eastern Europe," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 16, 2009.

http://wyborcza.pl/1,98817,6825987,An_Open_Letter_to_the_Obama_Administration_from_Central.html.

Figure I. Selected Countries in Central and Eastern Europe

Source: CRS Geospatial Information Systems and CRS Graphics.

Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary joined NATO in 1999, and Slovakia joined in 2004. All four countries regard NATO as the central pillar and guarantor of their national security, and all four have demonstrated their commitment to the alliance by participating in the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, among other activities. In addition to their membership in NATO and the EU, these four countries cooperate on a range of regional issues and interests as the Visegrád Group (V4).¹⁴

Energy dependence is a central consideration in V4 relations with Russia: about 59% of the natural gas consumed in Poland, 80% in Hungary, 84% in Slovakia, and 57% in the Czech Republic comes from Russia.¹⁵ In recent years, Russia has been actively trying to extend its influence in the region through energy deals and the acquisition of energy infrastructure. While business usually centers on natural gas, Hungary also agreed to a deal with Russia's state nuclear

¹⁴ The governments of Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia founded the Visegrád Group as a platform for regional cooperation in 1991 in the city of Visegrád, Hungary.

¹⁵ Eurogas, *Statistical Report 2013*, http://www.eurogas.org/uploads/media/Eurogas_Statistical_Report_2013.pdf.

company in early 2014 for the upgrade of a Hungarian nuclear power plant, financed by a €10 billion (about \$13.4 billion) loan from Moscow.

In February 2014, the V4 foreign ministers released a joint statement reiterating “their strong interest in maintaining the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Ukraine...”¹⁶ All V4 members agreed to the 5 rounds of limited sanctions (travel bans and asset freezes) imposed by the EU against Russian individuals and companies between March 17 and July 26 in response to the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine. (The EU’s common position is that the Crimea referendum was illegal, and no EU member states recognize its outcome.¹⁷) Furthermore, after the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 on July 17 and Russia’s subsequent failure to halt support for separatist forces in eastern Ukraine quickly shifted the sanctions debate in Europe, the V4 countries joined their fellow EU member states in adopting wider financial and trade sanctions against Russia on July 29.

Nevertheless, debates during the spring and early summer of 2014 about EU sanctions and responding to the Ukraine crisis exposed differences within the V4 significant enough that some observers questioned the future relevance of the grouping as a mechanism for coordinating foreign policy.¹⁸ Poland’s consistent and forceful advocacy of a robust response to Russia’s actions made it something of an outlier in the V4. Whether owing to a desire to preserve energy and economic ties with Russia, concerns about provoking Russia further, or the perception that Russia’s actions in Ukraine are distant and do not pose a direct threat to their countries, the governments of the other three countries have tended to be more reserved. Critics of these governments’ response noted an apparent preference for inaction by the governments of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and even some outright pro-Russian stances by the prime minister of Hungary.¹⁹

Poland stands out among the V4 group as having the most difficult relationship with Russia. Despite a mild, temporary thaw in the relationship after the Polish President and nearly 100 high-level Polish officials were killed in a 2010 airplane crash in Russia, Polish suspicions about the nature of Putin’s Russia have long persisted. Poland is by far the most populous country, the largest economy, and the most significant military actor of the V4.²⁰ Like many European countries, Poland is in the midst of a long-term transformation to a smaller, more capable, and more deployable military. Despite budgetary pressures, Poland is pursuing a broad equipment acquisition program linked to the need to phase out remaining Soviet-era material. In an effort to upgrade its main battle tanks and other armored vehicles, helicopters, air defenses, drones, and

¹⁶ *Joint Statement of V4 Foreign Ministers on Ukraine*, February 24, 2014, <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/joint-statement-of-v4>.

¹⁷ See http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/141601.pdf.

¹⁸ Edward Lucas, *V4: Grappling with irrelevance*, Central European Policy Institute, June 30, 2014.

¹⁹ For context, there have been concerns in the United States and EU in recent years about “backsliding” on democracy in Hungary, and some observers consider the recently reelected government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to have a “pro-Russian” outlook. Since 2010, analysts assert that the Fidesz party has used its parliamentary supermajority to weaken systemic checks and balances, limit the independence of mass media and civil society, and concentrate power around the prime minister. Ideological affinity between Orbán and Putin appears to derive largely from their similar visions of structuring their respective states in contrast to the “liberal” models of Western Europe and from parallel emphases on safeguarding the identity and rights of ethnically Hungarian or Russian communities living outside the borders of Hungary and Russia.

²⁰ According to the CIA World Factbook, the population of Poland is approximately 38.3 million, the Czech Republic 10.6 million, Hungary 9.9 million, and Slovakia 5.4 million.

individual soldier equipment, Poland has reportedly significantly increased equipment expenditures.²¹

Poland has been a leading allied participant in NATO's mission in Afghanistan. At the same time, given its enduring perception of Russia as a threat, Poland has also been a leading voice in calling for NATO to focus on its traditional vocation as an alliance of territorial defense. In the wake of the Crimea annexation, Polish officials revived a long-standing wish to base U.S. forces on their territory, calling for two NATO brigades (approximately 10,000 soldiers) to be stationed in Poland as a security guarantee.²² The 12 U.S. F-16s and 300 airmen deployed to Poland in March 2014 build on a small U.S. aviation detachment that was established in Poland in 2012, which has supported quarterly training rotations of 200 U.S. personnel operating F-16s and C-130s. Poland also participates in the U.S./NATO European Phased Adaptive Approach missile defense system, intended to guard against a possible Iranian missile threat. Aegis-ashore interceptors are scheduled to be deployed in Poland in 2018.

Of additional note with regard to Poland's security is the 5,800 square mile Russian exclave Kaliningrad, wedged between Poland and Lithuania. Kaliningrad has a heavy Russian military presence, including the Baltic Sea Fleet and two airbases. In addition, Russia has reportedly stationed, or at least threatened to station, Iskander short-range nuclear missiles there.²³

Compared to Poland, the militaries of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia are significantly smaller and possess more modest capabilities. Each of the three countries also faces substantial resource constraints and budget pressures: since 2008, the Czech Republic has cut its defense spending by 16%, Slovakia by 22%, and Hungary by 29%.²⁴ Nevertheless, the Czech and Hungarian forces are considered by military experts to be well-structured, well-equipped, well-trained, highly capable for their size, and experienced from participation in international deployments. The Czech government plans to increase defense spending from the current 1.0% of GDP to 1.4% by 2020, to replace equipment such as Soviet-era transport helicopters, and to continue developing niche capabilities such as chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense (CBRN).

Hungary intends to increase defense spending from the current 0.8% of GDP to 1.4% by 2022, to replace Soviet-era transport aircraft and helicopters, and to focus on maintaining elite special operations forces, developed in close cooperation with the United States, as well as rapidly-deployable light infantry units.

Analysts observe that a low defense budget presents the Slovak military with an especially difficult challenge because it faces a need to replace a large percentage of its ageing equipment—as much as 75% of Slovakia's defense equipment is past its life cycle and the military remains heavily dependent on Russian armaments.

In recent years, the V4 countries have sought to expand their cooperation from largely political matters to include security and defense. The four generally consult closely with one another in attempting to present a unified regional stance within NATO and on issues related to the EU's

²¹ Wojciech Lorenz, *EU Battle Group: A Chance for a Breakthrough in Visegrad 4 Cooperation*, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, April 16, 2013.

²² Neil Buckley, James Fontanella-Khan, and Jan Cienski, "Poland Calls for NATO Troop Deployment," *Financial Times*, March 1, 2014.

²³ Steve Gutterman, "Russia has Stationed Iskander Missiles in Western Region: Reports," *Reuters*, December 16, 2013.

²⁴ Wojciech Lorenz, *EU Battle Group: A Chance for a Breakthrough in Visegrad 4 Cooperation*, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, April 16, 2013.

Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). In 2013, the V4 countries launched plans to form an EU Battlegroup, a rapid reaction force consisting of 2,500 to 3,000 troops, to be operational by 2016. The V4 countries have also sought to increase military and industrial cooperation in line with NATO's Smart Defense and the EU's Pooling and Sharing initiative. Current or prospective areas of such cooperation include joint procurement of ammunition, armored vehicles, individual soldier equipment, and battlefield imaging systems, as well as joint logistics programs, and joint development of capabilities such as countering improvised explosive devices (IED); CBRN; joint training of helicopter pilots and air traffic controllers; and cyber defense.²⁵

Table 1. Visegrád Group Defense Information

	Army Size	Tanks	Artillery	Combat Aircraft	Attack Helicopters	2013 Defense Budget	Defense Spending % of GDP
Czech Republic	13,000	30	146	47	24	\$2.18 billion	1.1
Hungary	10,300	30	68	14	11	\$1.1 billion	0.8
Poland	48,200	893	783	106	28	\$9.83 billion	1.9
Slovakia	6,250	30	68	20	15	\$995 million	1.0

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2014*.

The Baltic States

The three Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, were formerly republics of the Soviet Union, having been absorbed into the USSR in 1940 after achieving independence between the two world wars. They became independent again with the breakup of the USSR in 1991 and joined both NATO and the European Union in 2004.

In general terms, the view of the Baltic countries is comparable to that of Poland in perceiving Russia as an enduring threat. Size, geographic location, and energy dependence make the Baltic countries vulnerable to Russia, and events in Ukraine have significantly increased anxiety in the Baltics. All three Baltic countries also have minority populations of ethnic Russians, a significant element in the threat calculation given that claims of persecution against Russian communities have been a part of the pretext for Russia's interventions in both Georgia and Ukraine.

Language issues have caused tensions between Russia and Latvia. In 2012, a referendum rejected naming Russian as Latvia's official second language, although it is the first language for about one-third of the population. In Estonia, plans to relocate a Soviet war memorial led to clashes between police and pro-Russian demonstrators in 2007. About one-quarter of Estonia's population is ethnically Russian. Estonia subsequently found itself the target of a large-scale coordinated cyberattack thought to have originated from either pro-Russian groups or from within the Russian government itself. Lithuania found itself singled out by Russia for trade sanctions in late 2013 as an expression of Russia's displeasure over energy issues and the EU's Eastern Partnership. Ethnic Russians comprise a smaller percentage of Lithuania's population, about 7%.

The Baltic countries joined their NATO and EU partners in strongly condemning Russia's annexation of Crimea as illegal. All three initially called for the EU to impose harsh political and

²⁵ Robert Kupiecki, *Visegard Defense Cooperation: From Mutual Support to Strengthening NATO and the EU*, Center for European Policy Analysis, April 2, 2013.

economic sanctions, but moderated their stance after economists suggested that severe EU sanctions against Russia, the Baltics' largest non-EU trade partner, could push the countries into an economic recession, with Latvia and Lithuania likely most affected.²⁶ Despite the potential economic consequences of the wider EU sanctions adopted July 29, however, the leaders of the Baltic countries have backed the expanded measures as a political imperative that outweighs economic disruption and discomfort.

The break-up of the USSR left the Baltic countries with virtually no national militaries, and their forces remain small and limited. The defense planning of the Baltic countries consequently relies heavily on NATO membership, and they have emphasized active participation in the alliance, including by having contributed troops to the Afghanistan mission. Analysts suggest that recent events in Ukraine are pushing the Baltic countries to recommit even more deeply to NATO. Beyond NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission (see below), some Baltic officials have urged NATO to establish a permanent base in the region. Rotating forces, increased exercises, and pre-positioning of assets may be a more likely NATO response to bolster security in the region.²⁷

Lacking their own fighter aircraft, the Baltic countries rely on their NATO allies to police and defend their airspace. NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission was launched in 2004 and is based at an airbase in Lithuania. About a dozen NATO members have taken part in the mission, including the United States, UK, France, Germany, Poland, Denmark, and the Czech Republic, providing four fighters at a time on rotating four-month deployment. In 2011, the Baltic countries pledged to gradually increase their combined contribution to the mission from €2.2 million (approximately \$3 million) in 2011 to €3.5 million (approximately \$4.8 million) in 2015 to pay for the costs of accommodating the air policing contingents, providing ground services for their aircraft, and contributing to the cost of aviation fuel.

Compared to most other members of NATO, Estonia spends a relatively high percentage of GDP on defense. The country is seeking to add a second infantry brigade by 2022, upgrade its air defense system, and modernize a range of ground warfare equipment. Estonia also hosts a NATO cyber defense center. Latvia's forces are smaller and less well equipped, and the country's defense spending has suffered from severe budgetary pressures. Latvia aims to double its defense spending as a percentage of GDP by 2020 and to procure new equipment, including armored vehicles, transport helicopters, and air defense radar. Lithuania's forces are likewise pursuing restructuring and re-equipment programs, but efforts have been similarly hindered by funding constraints. All three Baltic countries also contribute forces to the EU's Nordic Battlegroup, a rapid reaction unit of 2,400 troops expected to be ready and available for deployment in 2015 (additionally comprised of troops from Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Ireland).²⁸

Table 2. Baltic States Defense Information

	Army Size	Tanks	Artillery	Combat Aircraft	Attack Helicopters	2013 Defense Budget	Defense Spending % of GDP
Estonia	5,300	--	334	--	--	\$480 million	2.0
Latvia	1,250	3	76	--	--	\$300 million	1.0
Lithuania	7,350	--	48	--	--	\$355 million	0.8

²⁶ "Crimea crisis causes unease in the Baltics," *Economist Intelligence Unit*, April 1, 2014.

²⁷ Richard Milne, "Baltics Urge NATO to Base Permanent Force in Region," *Financial Times*, April 9, 2014.

²⁸ See <http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/about/our-mission-in-sweden-and-abroad/international-activities-and-operations/nordic-battle-group/>.

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2014*.

Moldova

Moldova's pro-Western government has responded to recent events in Ukraine with great concern. Moldova and Ukraine have stopped armed men trying to cross the border from Transnistria to Ukraine to "participate" in demonstrations against Ukraine's government. Transnistria, Moldova's breakaway region with a strongly pro-Russian government, has redoubled its long-standing efforts to secure Russia's recognition for its independence. Russia has not yet done so, but may have little more to lose in doing so now, given international condemnation of its actions in Ukraine. In March 2014, NATO's top military commander, General Philip Breedlove, expressed concern that Russian forces could sweep across eastern and southern Ukraine to link up with Transnistria. Such a move, while very ambitious, would have the advantage of linking the region directly with Russia.

However, while Moscow has shown hostility toward the Moldovan government, especially due to its signature of an Association Agreement with the European Union in June 2014, it has so far given no indications that it is planning military action against Moldova. Most observers believe that for the present Russia will continue to try to turn Moldova away from a pro-Western orientation by using indirect tactics such as imposing de facto trade sanctions, increasing support for Transnistria and separatism in Moldova's Gagauzia region, and supporting the Communist opposition to the government in the run-up to Moldova's parliamentary elections in November 2014. During a visit to Moldova on March 30, 2014, Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland confirmed U.S. support for Moldova's path toward European integration and for anti-corruption efforts, strengthening border security, boosting Moldovan exports, and energy security, among other areas.

Moldova does not seek NATO membership, but it does participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace program. NATO cooperation with Moldova includes such areas as defense strategy, planning and budgeting, as well as improving military education and training. Moldova currently receives very modest U.S. security assistance: an estimated \$1.25 million in Foreign Military Financing in FY2014, as well as \$750,000 in International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds. The Administration's FY 2015 aid request, drafted before the current conflict in Ukraine, includes the same amounts for FY 2015 for Moldova. However, Moldova may receive additional security assistance from the United States, perhaps as part of the Administration's proposed European Reassurance Initiative.

Table 3. Moldova Defense Information

	Army Size	Tanks	Artillery	Combat Aircraft	Attack Helicopters	2013 Defense Budget	Defense Spending % of GDP
Moldova	3,250	--	148	--	--	\$24 million	0.3

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2014*.

Ukraine

Ukraine's armed forces and police were unable to effectively oppose Russia's invasion of Crimea in February and March 2014. Pro-Russian gunmen took over Donetsk, Luhansk, and other towns and cities in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine in April and May. According to many observers, the weakness of Ukrainian forces was due to many factors, including poor training,

poor morale, shortages of key equipment, and treason in the military and police. However, since June 2014, Ukrainian forces have managed to overcome some of these problems and have inflicted serious defeats on the pro-Russian separatists. Ukrainian forces are seeking to surround the key “rebel” bastions in Donetsk and Luhansk and cut the separatists off from their source of supplies in Russia. Ukrainian leaders say they are seeking to avoid house-to-house fighting in big cities, which could cause a dramatic increase in military and civilian casualties. Even a prolonged siege of the cities would likely dramatically worsen the humanitarian situation. Ukrainian military spokesmen and some outside observers claim that Ukraine may be able to defeat the separatists in a matter of weeks, if Russia does not massively intervene to support them. Ukrainian leaders say that they want to negotiate the peaceful withdrawal of Russia-backed separatists from Ukraine as part of a peace plan for the region.

According to U.S. policy makers, the “rebels” deteriorating situation has caused Russia to increase its supply of tanks, artillery, armored personnel carriers, and other heavy weapons to them. Administration officials also say Russia supplied the “rebels” with the SA-11 anti-aircraft missile that was used to shoot down Malaysian Airline Flight MH17. U.S. officials have also provided satellite imaging that reportedly shows that Russian forces have launched artillery attacks on Ukrainian forces from Russian territory. They have said that Russia could be preparing to send additional, sophisticated heavy weaponry to separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Analysts have expressed concern about Russia’s reaction if the forces it has supplied are close to defeat. Russia could decide to abandon them (perhaps hoping to loosen U.S. and international sanctions on Russia), or it could openly invade eastern Ukraine with the forces it has deployed on the border. On July 30, NATO Supreme Allied Commander General Breedlove said that Russian troops on the border with Ukraine had increased to well over 12,000.

In March 2013, Ukraine requested military aid from the United States, according to several press reports. A full list of what Ukraine is seeking has not been disclosed, but press reports claim that Ukraine has asked for arms and ammunition, communications gear, intelligence support, aviation fuel, night-vision goggles, mine-clearing equipment, vehicles, medical gear, and other items.

The Administration has declined so far to send lethal military aid to Ukraine, but has provided non-lethal assistance. In an April 2014 fact sheet, the White House detailed an \$18 million security assistance package for Ukraine. The amount included 300,000 Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) to Ukraine in March, at a cost of about \$3 million. The Administration is also providing an additional nearly \$7 million in health and welfare assistance to Ukraine’s armed forces. An additional \$8 million in non-lethal support includes explosive ordinance disposal equipment and handheld radios for Ukraine’s military and engineering equipment, communications equipment, vehicles, and non-lethal individual tactical gear for Ukraine’s border guards.²⁹ On June 4, the Administration announced an additional \$5 million in security assistance to Ukraine. The funding will pay for body armor, night vision goggles, and communications equipment.³⁰ On June 7, the United States announced a further \$10 million to assist Ukraine’s State Border Guard Service, bringing total security assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of the crisis to \$33 million.

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 9, Assistant Secretary of Defense Derek Chollet said that during June and July, the United States delivered to Ukraine 1,929 first aid kits; 80 multiband handheld radios, 1,000 sleeping mats; over 5,000 uniform items. Ukraine received 2,000 body armor vests on July 4. He said that in July and August the United

²⁹ See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/21/fact-sheet-us-crisis-support-package-ukraine>.

³⁰ See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/04/fact-sheet-us-security-assistance-ukraine>.

States would supply to Ukraine 50 night-vision devices, 150 thermal imagers, 1,000 Kevlar helmets, 5 explosive ordnance disposal robots, and another 96 radios.

Some Members of Congress have argued for supplying lethal military aid to Ukraine and/or providing real-time intelligence support to Ukraine's armed forces, particularly in locating surface-to-air missiles, such as the one that shot down Flight MH17. Supporters of such aid say the United States needs to show resolve in the face of Russian aggression against Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. They argue such aid could serve to deter Putin from further incursions into eastern Ukraine. Some objections to lethal aid for Ukraine are that it could foreclose a diplomatic solution to the crisis; that it could actually provoke Putin to invade eastern Ukraine with his army; and that it could end U.S.-Russian cooperation in such issues as the withdrawal of U.S. equipment from Afghanistan.

Table 4. Ukraine Defense Information

	Army Size	Tanks	Artillery	Combat Aircraft	Attack Helicopters	2013 Defense Budget	Defense Spending % of GDP
Ukraine	64,750	1,150	2,170	231	139	\$2.42 billion	1.3

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2014*.

NATO-Russia Relations

Russian actions in Ukraine have prompted a reassessment of post-Cold War efforts to build a cooperative relationship with Moscow. As noted above, on April 2, NATO suspended all practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia. In the words of NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow, "For 20 years, the security of the Euro-Atlantic region has been based on the premise that we do not face an adversary to our east. That premise is now in doubt."³¹ According to some analysts, Russia's annexation of Crimea validates the concerns long expressed by some NATO member states, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, regarding Russia's commitment to partnership, its unpredictability, acts of hostility toward NATO and its partners, and perceived attempts to sow disunity within the alliance. On the other hand, while Russian actions have drawn uniform condemnation from NATO and the European Union, many in Europe and the United States emphasize that Europe's long-term security will depend on cooperative relations with Russia. As noted above, some NATO members in Western Europe have expressed concern that a military response to Russian actions could significantly hinder future attempts to boost cooperation with Russia.

The principal institutional mechanism for NATO-Russia cooperation has been the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), established in May 2002, five years after the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act provided the formal basis for bilateral cooperation. Most observers agree that despite having advanced NATO-Russia cooperation in some areas—including in Afghanistan—the NRC has failed to live up to its potential. These perceived shortcomings are often attributed to Russian suspicion about NATO's long-term intentions, including with respect to countries it long considered within its sphere of influence such as Ukraine and Georgia.

Many European allies continue to stress that they aspire to cooperation and partnership with Russia. However, analysts expect ties to continue to be marked by contention and mistrust, at

³¹ NATO, "A New Strategic Reality in Europe," speech by Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Alexander Vershbow to the 21st International Conference on Euro-Atlantic Security, April 4, 2014.

least for the time being. Moscow has objected to NATO and the United States' military responses to the crisis, calling into question the alliance's 1997 commitment—codified in the NATO-Russia Founding Act—not to permanently station substantial combat forces in countries that joined NATO after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although NATO has not as yet made decisions about permanent troop deployments, Secretary General Rasmussen has responded to Russian complaints by noting that Russia “has violated every principle and international commitment it has made.”³²

On July 29, 2014, EU member states (22 of which are also members of NATO) committed to ending all future arms sales to Russia, after months of pressure from governments and analysts on both sides of the Atlantic. The embargo will not, however, apply to previously agreed sales. Compared to other European arms sales, sales to Russia are relatively insignificant. However, over the past several years, some critics have drawn attention to several high profile deals. Chief among these is a 2011 French agreement to sell Russia two amphibious assault warships in a deal worth €1.2 billion (about \$1.6 billion)—the first ever sale of a significant offensive military capability by a NATO member to Russia. The first of these *Mistral* ships is scheduled to be delivered later this year. French President François Hollande has repeatedly stated that France would honor the existing contract.³³

Even before the annexation of Crimea, some Members of Congress and European leaders repeatedly criticized France's decision to sell the *Mistral* to Russia, expressing concern about Russia's military intentions,³⁴ while French commentators have noted the economic and associated political benefits of the sale for France.³⁵ Some Members of Congress have called on NATO to offer to purchase the *Mistrals* built for Russia from France.³⁶ Since Russia's annexation of Crimea, Germany has cancelled the planned sale of a military training facility to Russia; the UK and United States also say they have halted military cooperation.³⁷

Prospects for NATO Enlargement

Russian actions in Ukraine have prompted some U.S. observers and Members of Congress to call for a more concerted NATO effort to enlarge the alliance, particularly to the east.³⁸ Among other

³² NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen as quoted by Kathrin Hille and Peter Spiegel, “NATO Chief Defends Eastern Advance,” *Financial Times*, April 4, 2014.

³³ For example, On March 6, 2014, Hollande stated “we honor contracts we have signed. We are not yet at the stage [of imposing such sanctions] and we hope to avoid getting there.” As quoted by Hugh Carney, “Spotlight on French Military Deal with Russia,” *Financial Times*, March 7, 2014.

³⁴ They note, for example, that in August 2009, Admiral Vladimir Vysotskiy, the commander-in-chief of the Russian Navy, declared that the *Mistral* would have allowed “Russia's Black Sea fleet to accomplish its mission in 40 minutes, not 26 hours, which is how long it took us” during the Georgia conflict.³⁴ *CEDR*, September 13, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950041

³⁵ When then-President Nicolas Sarkozy announced the sale in March 2011, he touted that the deal would bring “6 million hours of work and 1,200 jobs maintained over 4 years.” He added that he hoped to make the shipyard town of Saint-Nazaire, which has faced high unemployment levels, a symbol of French industrial achievement. Nicolas Sarkozy, as quoted in Open Source Center Analysis: *European Officials, Media Concerned about French Sale to Russia*, EUF2011031863900, March 18, 2011.

³⁶ See, Rep. Eliot Engel, Rep. William Keating, and Rep. Michael Turner, letter to NATO Secretary General Rasmussen, May 30, 2014. <http://engel.house.gov/latest-news1/engel-stop-sale-of-french-warships-to-russia/>.

³⁷ Pierre Tran, “Europe Ramps Up Defense Posture Amid Russia Crisis,” *Defense News*, March 23, 2014.

³⁸ In February 2014, a bipartisan group of 40 Members of the House sent a letter to Secretary of State Kerry urging the Administration to support granting NATO membership to Montenegro and Macedonia and a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia at NATO's September summit in Wales. The lawmakers also called for intensified progress on advancing Bosnia-Herzegovina's MAP.

things, they argue that continued enlargement would send an important signal to aspiring members that NATO's "open door" policy will not be scaled back in the face of Russian opposition. Some proponents of enlargement add that Russia would be less willing and less able to take the aggressive actions it has in Ukraine, Georgia, and elsewhere in its near-abroad if these countries were members of the alliance. Despite these calls, most analysts consider NATO unlikely to make any significant progress toward expanding over the next several years. They point to a perception in some Western European countries that NATO has enlarged too quickly and that the alliance should agree on how to resolve a complex range of issues, including managing relations with Russia, before taking in new members. For some allied governments, ongoing territorial disputes with Russia in countries such as Georgia and Ukraine could be a strong deterrent to extending membership invitations to these countries.

Four countries are currently considered formal aspirants for NATO membership: Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Georgia. Montenegro has had a Membership Action Plan (MAP) since December 2009. Although it is considered the candidate with the most advanced membership prospects, NATO officials have cautioned that Montenegrin security agencies and the defense sector require reforms to meet NATO standards and that further efforts need to be made to fight corruption and organized crime in the country. Some have also questioned the level of public support for NATO membership in Montenegro. Bosnia was formally invited to join the MAP in April 2010, but was told that its Annual National Program under the MAP would not be accepted until the country resolved the issue of immovable defense property (mainly former military bases and barracks) on its territory. The country's leaders have agreed in principle to resolve the issue, but many doubt whether Bosnia can agree on whether to join NATO, as Bosnian Serb leaders have given mixed signals on the issue and public opinion polls have shown very strong opposition to membership among the Bosnian Serb population. NATO agreed that Macedonia met the qualifications for membership in 2008, but its candidacy has been stalled due to a protracted dispute with NATO ally Greece over the country's official name. The two sides have been unable to resolve the issue during talks sponsored by the United Nations.

Representatives of Ukraine's current government have said the country is not seeking NATO membership. This reflects long-standing indifference, if not opposition, to NATO membership in the country. Under former President Yanukovich, the country renounced previously asserted ambitions to join NATO. According to one March 2014 opinion poll, 34% of Ukrainians were for NATO membership, and 44% opposed, with a regional split of 74% for membership in western Ukraine and 67% opposed in the east.³⁹ As the conflict in Ukraine has persisted, there has been some indication that public support for NATO membership has increased to some degree, though not significantly.

Some observers assert that the Ukrainian government could be cautious about expressing ambitions to join NATO for a number of reasons, including sensitivity to public opinion and possible opposition to membership from countries within the alliance that would be reluctant to further antagonize Russia. In early April, in response to NATO Secretary General Rasmussen's assertion that the door to NATO membership for Ukraine remained open, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier reportedly countered that "NATO membership for Ukraine is not pending."⁴⁰

³⁹ The International Republican Institute, *Public Opinion Survey Residents of Ukraine*, March 14-26, 2014. <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20April%205%20IRI%20Public%20Opinion%20Survey%20of%20Ukraine%2C%20March%2014-26%2C%202014.pdf>.

⁴⁰ "Ukraine Crisis Exposes Gaps between Berlin and NATO," *Spiegelonline*, April 7, 2014.

In September 2008, NATO and Georgia established the NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC) in an effort both to oversee NATO assistance to Georgia after its 2008 conflict with Russia and to supervise progress toward eventual membership in the alliance, as called for at NATO's 2008 Bucharest Summit. Since then, the two sides have deepened cooperation in a variety of areas, especially on defense and security sector reform, and Georgia has contributed to ongoing NATO operations, including by deploying the second-largest non-NATO contingent in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, most observers believe that the unresolved situation in Georgia's breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia could continue to pose a major obstacle to possible Georgian membership for the foreseeable future. They contend that as long as the territorial dispute persists, some allies could oppose defining a specific timeline for membership. Georgia has not been granted a Membership Action Plan, but Administration officials have indicated that they would support granting a MAP to Georgia at NATO's September summit in Wales.

Some observers have argued that recent Russian military aggression could indirectly serve to boost support for NATO membership in Sweden and Finland. Since joining NATO's Partnership for Peace Program in 1994, both countries have been active participants in NATO operations and have taken significant steps to modernize their militaries. In a reflection of continuing sensitivities regarding relations with Russia, both have also continued to maintain long-standing policies of military "nonalignment." In 2013, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said that Moscow would be forced to "respond" if Finland or Sweden joined NATO, and in the past year Russian forces have performed air and land exercises near Swedish and Finnish territory. Recent Russian actions and statements have led at least one Swedish government official to advocate a "doctrinal shift" in defense policy; and Finland's current Prime Minister supports NATO membership.⁴¹ Nonetheless, public opinion in both countries remains firmly opposed to NATO membership. Some analysts assert that at the least, the two governments could continue to bolster defense spending and cooperation with other Nordic states and the Baltics.

U.S. Policy

The crisis in Ukraine has renewed focus on the U.S. commitment to European security and on overall U.S. force posture in Europe. Since the end of the Cold War, as NATO and the EU have enlarged eastward and as both organizations have pursued partnership with Russia, the perceived need for a robust U.S. military presence to defend the continent receded. Today, about 67,000 U.S. forces are stationed in Europe, primarily in Germany, Italy, and the UK; this is down from a Cold War high of about 400,000. Some allies in Central and Eastern Europe have consistently expressed concerns about the reduced U.S. force posture, and especially the recent withdrawal of two of the Army's four Brigade Combat Teams. Other allies and U.S. policy makers supported the shift, particularly given other security challenges facing the United States and NATO. The adjusted U.S. force posture has coincided with U.S. calls for European allies and the EU to enhance their own military capabilities in order to boost NATO's effectiveness and reduce Europe's dependence on the U.S. security guarantee. As discussed above, such efforts have had mixed results, at best.

The Obama Administration and its supporters assert that the United States remains prepared and able to honor its commitments to the defense and security of fellow NATO member states. In addition to the aforementioned U.S. military responses to the crisis in Ukraine, they note that the United States was a key proponent of NATO's drafting of contingency plans for the defense of Poland and the Baltic States in 2009, and they draw attention to recent U.S. calls for a new round

⁴¹ Alistair Scrutton and Sakari Suoninen, "As Russia growls, Swedes, Finns Eye Defence Options, NATO," *Reuters*, April 1, 2014.

of NATO contingency planning. They add that the U.S. agreement in 2011 to establish an Air Force Aviation detachment in Poland has paved the way for the recent deployment of 12 F-16s to the country, and point out that to compensate for the reduction of U.S. Brigade Combat Teams in Europe, the Department of Defense has committed a U.S.-based rapid reaction force to rotate to Europe for joint training exercises.⁴²

The current cornerstone of the U.S. commitment to NATO military capabilities in Europe is the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) program known as the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA). The U.S. system, designed to defend alliance territory against possible missile attacks from Iran and other potential adversaries, serves as the foundation for a new NATO missile defense capability, based primarily on U.S. assets under NATO command and control. The United States has deployed missile defense ships to the Mediterranean, ready to operate under NATO control when necessary. A U.S. radar, based in Turkey, is also under NATO operational control. Interceptor sites are to be deployed in Romania in 2015 and in Poland in 2018. The United States and NATO have consistently emphasized, however, that the missile defense system is neither intended to nor capable of defending against a potential missile attack from Russia.

While they have welcomed these steps, critics of the Administration's and NATO's response to Russian actions in Ukraine have argued that more should be done to support Ukraine, reassure allies in Central and Eastern Europe, and counter Russian aggression. Some have called for bolstered and possibly permanent NATO and/or U.S. troop deployments in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as more frequent military exercises, including in the Black Sea. For example, as discussed above, the Polish government has requested the deployment of two heavy brigades of NATO troops on its territory. In a March 26, 2014, letter to President Obama, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Buck McKeon and seven other Members of Congress called on the President to "increase and enhance the alert posture and readiness of U.S. forces in Europe without delay, including maintaining forward-deployed U.S. quick-reaction forces."⁴³ At an April 10, 2014, hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on European Affairs, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Derek Chollet said that he did not foresee a significant adjustment to the U.S. military's permanent footprint in Europe, but added that forward or rotational deployments to Central and Eastern Europe were an ongoing possibility.⁴⁴

Critics of Administration policy draw attention to the fact that only 300 U.S. forces reportedly participated in NATO's November 2013 Steadfast Jazz exercise in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. The 6,000-troop exercise—the largest NATO exercise to take place in the region in over 10 years—was intended to certify command and control elements of the NATO Response Force, including in response to a possible attack on the territory of a NATO member state. Other analysts have questioned the Administration's commitment to missile defense, noting that in 2013, the Administration dropped Phase 4 of the EPAA, which would have deployed in Europe land- and possible sea-based versions of advanced naval BMD interceptors designed to destroy limited numbers of first generation intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

⁴² See, for example, Samuel Charap and Lee Feinstein, "Obama's Quiet Offensive," ProjectSyndicate.org, April 3, 2014.

⁴³ House Armed Services Committee, "Armed Services Leaders Urge President to Act on Ukraine," March 26, 2014. http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/press-releases?ContentRecord_id=AE52EEAE-20D7-4C07-AE4B-1520D8287DD2.

⁴⁴ Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on European Affairs, *Transatlantic Security Challenges: Central and Eastern Europe*, April 10, 2014. Transcript available at <http://www.cq.com/doc/congressionaltranscripts-4459211>.

As discussed above, the United States has provided the Ukrainian government with some nonlethal military aid but has thus far declined to provide lethal military aid. Some analysts, including a former NATO military commander, have argued that the United States and other allies should consider providing additional military assistance, including intelligence and surveillance capabilities and anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons.⁴⁵

Congress could continue to play an important role in shaping U.S. and NATO responses to Russia's actions in Ukraine. In terms of U.S. defense policy, possible congressional action could include reexamining U.S. force posture in Europe and assessing U.S. capacity and willingness to uphold its collective defense commitments in Europe. Congress could also take an increasingly active role in determining U.S. policy toward NATO and in guiding broader discussions about NATO's future, particularly ahead of the next NATO summit, scheduled to take place in Wales on September 4-5, 2014. This could include holding hearings and/or drafting legislation on issues such as development of allied military capabilities and military burdensharing within the alliance, the allied commitment to NATO enlargement and its relations with partner countries such as Ukraine and Georgia, NATO relations with Russia, and NATO involvement in areas such as cybersecurity and energy security.

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⁴⁵ See, for example, James Stavridis, "How to Fend off the Russians in Seven Simple Steps," *Foreignpolicy.com*, April 10, 2014.

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